(b) whether it is a fact that very little positive, constructive and useful research has come out of the CTRI in the last three years;

(c) the steps proposed to energise this body in the interest of the farmers; and

(d) the details of measures proposed in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) The Central Tobacco Research Institute (CRTI) is conducting basic, applied, strategic and anticipatory research on different types of tabacco grown under varied agro-ecological situations in the country.

(b) No, Sir. The CRTI has developed ten new varieties and crop production and portection technologies such as integrated nutrient management, irrigation water management, modified barn for reducing cost of curing, integrated pest management, etc. during the last three years.

(c) and (d) Research programmes of CRTI have been reoriented to provide thrust on alternative use of tobacco, reduction of harmful substances like Tar, TSNA & pesticide residues, viable tobacco based cropping systems, organic farming , etc.. Needbased budget provisions have been made to conduct research on above programmes.

Venture capital fund

1803. SHRI MOOLCHAND MEENA: DR.
T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have approved Rs. 48 crores venture capital fund for agri-sector business;

(b) if so, whether this venture capital is accepted to provide much needed relief to farmers for whom one of the biggest hurdles has been lack of acess to easy credit;

(c) whether, in a recent National Sample Survey Organisation only 15 per cent farmers said that they had availed of any loan;

(d) whether, with this venture capital, they would be able to obtain bigger loans from banks and its processing will be easier; and

(e) if so, to what extent this has helped the farmers and the total funds, so far, provided to the farmers from this fund?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) and (b) The Ministry of Agriculture has implemented a new Central Sector Scheme with effect from July, 2005 to provide venture capital assistance to agri-business projects and to assist producer's group in the preparation of detailed reports for such projects. The main abjective of the Scheme is to catalyze private investment in setting up of agri-business projects and threby providing assured markets to producers for increasing rural income and employment. The scheme has been approved with an outaly of Rs.48 crores during remaining period of Tenth Plan. The scheme is implemented by the Small Farmers'Agri-business Consortium (SFAC), an autonomous organization under this Ministry. Venture capital assistance is provided for those projects that encourage the farmers to diversify into high value crops and provide them with assured market and increased farm income. Assistance provided under the scheme lowers the business risk to the agri entrepreneurs and enhances the financial viability of the projects for the banks.

(c) To study the state of the Indian Farmers, National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) conducted a countrywide survey during January to December, 2003. The survey report on "Indebtedness of Farmer Households" released by NSSO in the month of May, 2005 deals with the indebtedness among farmer households according to source or purpose of loan and their distribution over different social and economic parameters such as social groups, source of income, size-class of land possessed etc. The survey report says that at all India level, 48.6% of the formers house holds were reported to be indebted *i.e.* having a liability in cash or kind with value Rs 300 or more at the time of transaction.

(d) and (e) For an effective implementation of agri-business projects, a Memorandum of Understading (MoU) has been signed between SFAC and several important banks namely Oriental Bank of Commerce, UCO Bank, Bank of Baroda, Punjab National Bank, Central Bank of India, Allahabad Bank, Canara Bank, Vijaya Bank, Jammu & Kashmir Bank Limited, Bank of Maharshtra and Syndicate Bank, SFCA has so far approved Venture Capital Assistance to 24 Agri-Business Projects involving a cost of Rs. 93.07 crore. These projects will help in direct linking of about 25000 farmers to assured market for their produce.